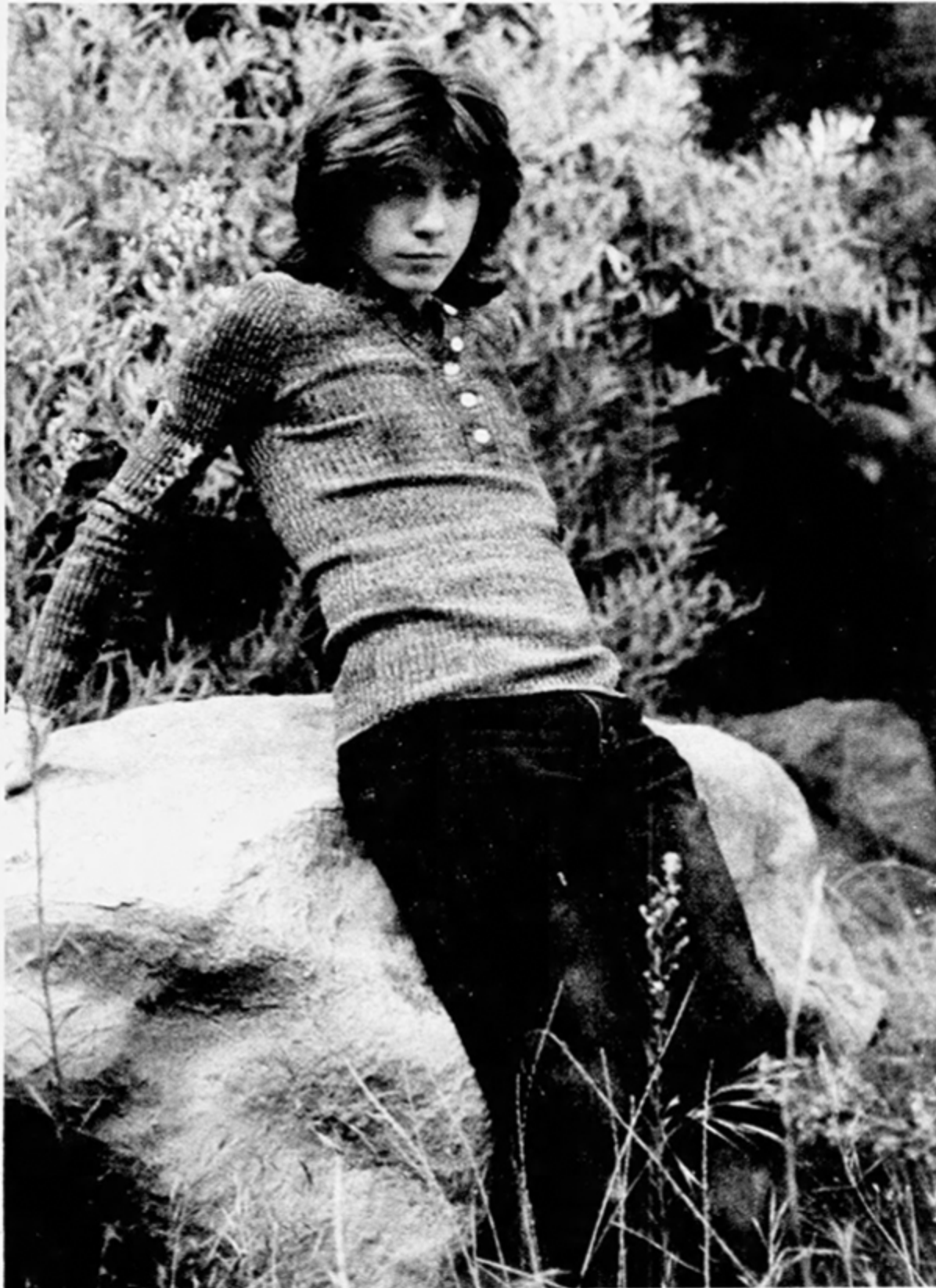


## David Cassidy: self-centered and successful



Young star admits he's only interested in number one as he builds fame on 'The Partridge Family'

by BOB LARDINE

THE SCREEN GEMS SET seven miles from Hollywood is bustling with performers and technicians, but David Cassidy is easy to locate. Even with his back turned, the frail, smallish youngster is immediately recognizable. Who else in television has a body as thin as a whiskey stirrer and hair flowing down to his shoulders?

As he stands there patiently, lighting experts prepare for the next scene of another "Partridge Family" episode. A tap on the shoulder, and he turns around quickly.

But it isn't David Cassidy at all. Instead, it's a pretty, small-chested, 22-year-old girl named Jan Freeman, who is working at the moment as Cassidy's stand-in. Somehow, it's difficult to think how a mistake like this could have been made if a reporter wanted to interview a more old-fashioned idol like John Wayne.

The real David Cassidy is inside a trailer, getting made up for a scene in which he will run frantically from a huge grizzly bear that is tamer than a week-old kitten. When he emerges from the trailer, his makeup includes a scrape on the side of his face and rips in his clothes, which make him appear even more delicate and vulnerable.

If Cassidy finds it humiliating that a female is used to stand in for him, he hides it admirably. "Why should I be resentful?" he asks. "She's beautiful and about my size. How tall are you, Jan? Five-five, huh? Well, I'm two inches taller. Jan has a good figure, but I'll never be able to match her twenty-two inch waist."

Nobody watching ABC-TV's amazingly successful "The Partridge Family" would want Cassidy to change an inch anyway. The teenybopper, gum-chewing set adore him. Each day, scores of girls wait for him outside the studio. They arrive early and don't mind waiting as much as eight hours just to glimpse their skinny idol. When Cassidy's gallbladder was removed last July, Screen Gems was bombarded with requests from his admirers to bronze the gallstones. Other young ladies plead for clippings of his hair.

Before "The Partridge Family" flew across TV screens last year, Cassidy was unknown to pubescent girls and everyone else, too. His only claim to fame was that his father was actor Jack Cassidy, and that he appeared briefly on Broadway in the Allan Sherman musical, "The

Fig Leaves Are Falling." (No critic saw fit to mention him in their reviews.) Few viewers remember Cassidy from guest shot roles in such shows as "Marcus Welby," "The FBI" and "Bonanza."

Cassidy is quick to admit that he may suffer the fate of most instant hotshots. "I really don't know whether young girls will abandon me in a year or two. An actor's career often suffers ups and downs. Sometimes you're hot and sometimes you're cold. But I do think that I'm not on the same level as other young actors. I think I have a lot going for me."

And Cassidy's gleefully cashing in on every bit of it. This past September, for example, he squeezed in concerts at Roanoke, Richmond, Miami Beach and Tampa even though he could barely drag his tired body on stage.

Each engagement was sold out weeks in advance as thousands of kids jammed halls and arenas to glimpse this phenomenon with the ball-point pen body and the face of a 13-year-old.

Cassidy's biography optimistically lists him as 130 pounds, but he'd fall short of that figure even if carrying a 15-pound script.

"It's true that I went down to 105 after my gallbladder operation," he says, "but I've put most of it back in the last couple of months."

He's interrupted as a truck passes nearby carrying props for the next scene. The vehicle raises a suffocating cloud as its tires bite into the soft ground.

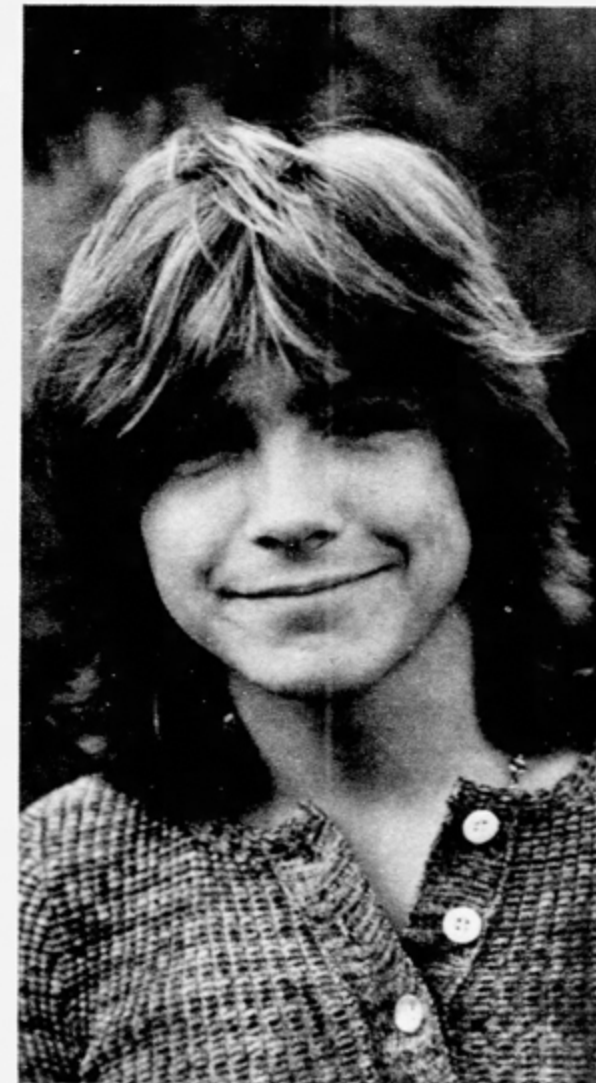
"Oh, God," groans Cassidy. "I'm allergic to dust. I'll probably end up dying right here on the set." Judging by his pallor, it doesn't seem too far from the truth.

Unlike most performers, Cassidy refuses to share credit for his success with anyone else. "I've done this whole bit on my own. It all happened after I split from home when I was 18. My father never helped me. I was only five when he was divorced from my mother (actress Evelyn Ward). It's true that Mom contributed a great deal to my mental attitude regarding show business, but she had no connections that could have helped me. As for my stepmother (actress Shirley Jones, who portrays his real mother on the series), she rarely discusses acting with me. We talk about everything but that subject."

The fallow-faced youngster never talks to his father about the show, either.

"There really isn't that much to discuss," says Cassidy with a shrug. "I'll say to him: 'I'm on the Partridge Family show.' And Dad will say: 'Oh yeah, I know.'"

One of young Cassidy's dreams is to appear in a film with his father. "He's an excellent actor and I respect him very much. We've never done a vehicle together, and I'd love to work with him. But right now, both our careers are too hectic to plan anything."



Young actor prefers being called David, and nobody in his family or out of it refers to him as Dave or Davey.



Cassidy and his stand-in, Jan Freeman, relax on set outside of Hollywood. She also works as extra on show.

Executives of "The Partridge Family" swear it's only mere coincidence that Cassidy wound up on the same show as his illustrious stepmother. They claim they weren't influenced by either Shirley Jones or Cassidy's highly esteemed actor dad. The 21-year-old just happened to be right for the part is what they consistently maintain. Whatever the truth of the matter, there's little doubt that casting Cassidy as Keith in the show was pure genius. He has attracted young viewers by the millions to the series.

Cassidy fully realizes his enormous drawing power, but he graciously puts in a good word for other members of the series.

"All the people on the show are positive and give off good vibes," he says. "The program has very few weaknesses, and the chemistry between performers is beautiful. A big reason why viewers tune in regularly is the music, certainly the best on television."

On the program, Cassidy presents a wholesome, clean-cut, All-American boy image. He is without flaws and therefore totally unbelievable except to more than 10 million little girls who can't tell the difference anyhow.

In reality, Cassidy is likeable, extremely honest and as he himself put it "more than a little selfish." He says: "I really can't get involved with what's happening in Vietnam some 8,000 miles away. I'm too involved with myself and my career. I don't have time to think about whether American troops should be in or out. I never lose any sleep over it. To tell you the truth, I'm tired of hearing about it."

Cassidy's safe from unhappy spots like Vietnam because he's no longer eligible for the draft. He had number 326 in the first lottery and wasn't called. His year of eligibility was up last January and he no longer fears the clutches of the Army.

But the "wholesome, All-American" youngster maintains that he would never have wound up in Vietnam even if he had been called up. "I simply wouldn't have gotten as far as the induction center. I would never have permitted such a thing to happen. I would have found a way—school or something else to get me out of being drafted. I certainly didn't want to go and die for something that I didn't believe in."

A year from now, Cassidy will be entitled for the first time to vote in a Presidential election. He isn't sure that he will take advantage of the opportunity. "I'll only vote if there is a choice. I really am totally in the dark about President Nixon's policies. I suppose the whole country is. But then again, politics bore me. I rarely read a paper because it is so depressing. It's so negative. Ninety per cent of what you read is such a bringdown. I would rather be uninformed than depressed and informed. Who

continued on page 65